



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Heather Bond Somers and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, January 28, 2014

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Somers

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

*Councilor Frink noted that he and Councilor Moravsik visited Naugatuck and Wethersfield.
Councilor Moravsik noted various meetings and functions he has attended.*

4. Approval of Minutes

2014-0019 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings of December 23, 2013, January 7, 2014, January 11, 2014, and January 14, 2014 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to adopt with the following modification:

1/11/14 Minutes - p. 2, para. 2, modify the third sentence to read "He defined core skills as those that 'manage work' and suggested that the Town outsource 'do work'."

Councilor Flax noted that the statement made by the Town Clerk at the January 14th Committee of the Whole meeting that the Town Clerk is an ex-officio member of the Council was incorrect.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2014-0037 Battle of Mystic Battlefield Project Update by Kevin McBride

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Dr. Kevin McBride of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center noted that he will be conducting a public information meeting on the Battle of Mistick Fort project on February 13th at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Annex.

Dr. McBride explained that the project began in 2007 and the museum has received a total of eight grants to study, document, and preserve battlefields of the Pequot War. To date, most work has been focused on the Battle of Mystic Fort including the attack and English withdrawal to the

Thames River. A large part of that battle occurred on property owned by the Town of Groton. Dr. McBride distributed a Connecticut Magazine publication with an article on the project, a brief summary report, and a series of maps showing the study area, key terrain features, the Battle of Mystic Fort core area, and the English Retreat and Pequot Counterattack district. Project work involves research of historical narratives and metal detecting.

The museum recently received another two year grant and work will begin again in the spring. Mr. McBride described the area of new finds and the types of materials that have been found to date. He provided an overview of the retreat and the process required to identify the route. The Battle of Mistick Fort was the largest battle of the Pequot War with the greatest number of casualties.

Dr. McBride explained that the ultimate goal of the project is to develop plans, perspectives, and initiatives to protect the site and educate the public. The museum is preparing an application for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Dr. McBride addressed concerns of landowners, including the Town, noting that inclusion of property in the application is voluntary and inclusion in the register does not prevent property owners from doing anything with their property. The goal is to raise awareness and perhaps work with the Town's planning and zoning department to notify property owners of when they apply for permits. The educational component may include electronically available information or passive exhibitry for example.

Dr. McBride offered to host the Town Council for a tour of the museum's research facilities.

In response to Councilor Flax, Dr. McBride stated that he could provide a display for the Groton Public Library. Grants are also available for education and programs.

Discussion followed on the project and findings. Dr. McBride stated he will be asking for the Town Council's permission to include Town property in the multi-property National Register application.

2014-0004**Pending Litigation (2014 Standing Referral)****Discussed**

Councilors Moravsik and Cerf recused themselves.

A motion was made by Mayor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that the members of the Town Council Committee of the Whole, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Matthew Auger, go into executive session at 6:47 p.m. pursuant to General Statutes 1-200(6) (B) for the purpose of discussing pending litigation with respect to the tax assessment of residential property in Groton Long Point.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Non-voting: 2 - Councilor Cerf and Councilor Moravsik

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 7:39 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Mayor Schmidt, that the members of the Town Council Committee of the Whole, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Matthew Auger, go into executive session at 7:42 p.m. pursuant to General Statutes 1-200(6)(B) for the purpose of discussing a pending claim and/or pending litigation concerning the City of Groton highway budget appropriation for FY 2013-201.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 8:24 p.m.

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 8:26 p.m. for a special meeting of the Town Council and

reconvened at 9:41 p.m.

2014-0041 2014 Rates for Shennecossett Golf Course

Discussed

Director of Parks and Recreation Mark Berry, and Eric Morrison and Todd Goodhue of Shennecossett Golf Course were present. Mr. Berry explained that the Golf Advisory Board approved a 2% rate increase for daily rates. The Board's recommendation was reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission, which recommended also increasing the seasonal rates by 2%.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Mr. Goodhue stated that he does not feel the 2% increase will dissuade people from joining. Mr. Berry noted that the department did a survey this year that indicated 94% of respondents felt the value was good at Shennecossett. Shennecossett's daily fees are comparable to the competition, and season passes are lower. Fees are based on a sliding scale that takes into consideration tee times and days of the week.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0040 Request to Transfer Funds to Arts Cafe Mystic

Discussed

Jerry Lokken, Manager of Recreation Services, noted that the last Arts Café event sponsored by the Town of Groton was in 2010. The program has been taken over by a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The Town has \$571.75 remaining in an Arts Café account and Mr. Lokken is recommending that the funds be turned over to the organization. Alternately, the funds could be returned to the General Fund in recognition of the administrative support provided by Parks and Recreation over the years. Councilors supported donating the funds to the Arts Café organization.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0039 Request to Donate Piano to Groton Regency

Discussed

The Town owns a piano that was donated to the Senior Center in 1981. The Center recently received a donation of an electric piano that does not need tuning. Groton Regency has expressed an interest in receiving the old piano that is valued at \$150.00.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Cerf, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Although arrangements have not been made to move the piano, the Town Manager assured the Committee that the Town will not hire anyone to move it. It is the Manager's preference that Groton Regency picks up the piano from the center.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0017 FYE 2013 CAFR

Not Discussed

2013-0232 FYE 2015 Budget

Discussed

Discussion followed on the Council's desire to conduct a pre-budget public hearing. Councilor Flax suggested a more open, round-table discussion in a Town meeting format, rather than a public hearing. The session was scheduled for February 25th during the Committee of the Whole meeting.

The Town Manager distributed draft budget review schedules and a calendar. He asked

Councilors to notify the Town Manager's office of their availability at the end of March through the end of April.

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo was present to discuss increasing the General Fund unassigned fund balance from 7.5% to 7.75%.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to increase the General Fund unassigned fund balance from 7.5% to 7.75%.

Councilor Cerf stated she would prefer to wait on this item until the proposed budget is developed. Mr. Pandolfo explained that this issue was raised with the Council in September. Currently there is an unassigned fund balance of 9.7%. Staff is asking the Council to consider a .25% increase which equates to about \$300,000, leaving \$2.3 million to fund FYE 2015 expenditures.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Abstain: 1 - Councilor Cerf

2014-0038 Community Development Block Grant Application

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that there is a fair amount of rehabilitation work needed at both facilities run by the Groton Housing Authority (Grasso Gardens and Pequot Village). Town staff has had discussions with the Housing Authority and ECHO regarding an application for Community Development Block Grant funding in the amount of \$800,000. The funds would go to the Housing Authority, but the Town would have to formally submit the application. The first step in the process is conducting a public hearing, which was recommended for February 18th.

A motion was made, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to schedule a public hearing on the Community Development Block Grant application on February 18, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously

Town Manager Oefinger asked the Committee to add an item to the agenda concerning a personnel issue.

2014-0042 Non-Union Personnel Matter

NON-UNION PERSONNEL MATTER

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Cerf, pursuant to Council Rules section 7(b) and CGS section 1-225(c), that Rule 7(b) of the rules of the Council be suspended to allow the addition of and that the following item be added to the agenda of this meeting: Non-union personnel matter (potential executive session re: Police employee).

The motion carried unanimously

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Mayor Schmidt, that the members of the Town Council Committee of the Whole, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan, go into executive session at 10:16 p.m. pursuant to General Statutes 1-200(6) (A) for the purpose of discussing the employment and/or health of the Chief of Police.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 10:53 p.m.

2013-0287 Town Attorney Appointment

Not Discussed

2013-0286 Town Council Goals

Not Discussed

2012-0050 Potential Disposition of William Seely School Property

Not Discussed

2014-0008 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2014 Standing Referral)**Discussed**

Councilors were reminded that there will be a joint meeting with the City Council on Monday, February 3rd at 6:00 p.m. at the City Municipal Building.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

Referrals recommended for discussion/deletion were not discussed.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The Personnel/Appointments Committee meeting on February 4th was moved to 5:30 p.m. and a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole was scheduled for 6:00 p.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:58 p.m.